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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5027  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1829  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4579  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1951  
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SUBJECT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PAPUA -- A TALE OF TWO TOWNS

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Classified By: Pol/Ext Daniel Turnbull for reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Two Papuan towns--coastal Nabire and highland Wamena--present vastly different pictures of local governance and development. Nabire's relatively effective local government has made progress on development priorities, although tensions between migrants and ethnic Papuans lurk beneath the surface. Local government failures in Wamena have left the town facing severe governance and development challenges. Papuans in both towns remain impatient over the slow implementation of the province's Special Autonomy Law. As Papua gears up for local elections this year, these issues will likely come increasingly to the fore. END SUMMARY.

NABIRE: RELATIVE SUCCESS, UNDERLYING TENSION

12. (C) Poloff visited Nabire, located on the coast of the Cendrawasih Bay in central Papua on May 5. (Note: Nabire is the capital of the homonymous district that is home to approximately 160,000 people.) Bupati (Regent) Anselmus Petrus Youw, Vice Bupati Tonny Karubaba and other local officials briefed poloff on local political and development issues. (Bio note: Youw, who appears to be approximately 60 years old, is a 3rd degree black belt in karate.)

13. (C) District officials said the region was still recovering from the November 2004 earthquake that left 80 percent of the town's buildings damaged or destroyed. Most public buildings have been rebuilt, including a hospital, schools and the local government offices. Rebuilding of private structures is also proceeding apace.

14. (C) Officials are now turning their attention to longer-term economic priorities. Vice Bupati Karubaba told poloff that the local government had commissioned a mineral survey that found potentially exploitable reserves of gold, copper and nickel. (Note: The Nabire market contained numerous dealers buying and selling gold, most of it panned in local rivers. Officials had no information about the volume of gold trade in the town.) Karubaba complained, however, that lack of roads into the interior hampered

efforts to develop the region's mineral resources. The town's remote location also made it difficult to attract the investment necessary to develop a mining industry.

¶15. (C) Local officials told poloff their key development priorities matched those that Governor Suebu had set for all of Papua Province: education, health and infrastructure. They complained, however, that the provincial government was slow to provide them with the money to implement these plans. They also said the central government still had not promulgated all the regulations called for under Papua's Special Autonomy Law, further hindering their ability to move forward with development.

¶16. (C) Provincial government officials have their own criticism of the Nabire administration. In a subsequent Jayapura meeting, Suebu advisors told poloff that the Governor believed Nabire officials placed too great a priority on development in the district capital. They had resisted the Governor's village-based development plan, which gave priority to rural areas. As a result, relations between Jayapura and Nabire were frosty at best, Suebu's advisors said.

¶17. (C) Local military (TNI) officials told poloff that the military's primary focus was to prepare to respond to natural disasters. Battalion commander LtCol Hidayat S. gave poloff a detailed briefing on the TNI response to the 2004 earthquake and preparations for possible future disasters. He said, however, that the local battalion lacked the training and equipment necessary to cope effectively with a major disaster.

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¶18. (C) Despite the relative success of Nabire's reconstruction and development, not everyone is happy. In a meeting with poloff, civil society and religious groups outlined their grievances. Chief among these is the claim that ethnic Papuans are now a minority in the district. (Note: There are no reliable figures detailing the ethnic composition of Nabire. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this claim could be true.) Officials from the human rights group Elsham-Papua told poloff that migrants--mostly from Sulawesi and the Maluku--benefited from the district's development while ethnic Papuans were being left behind. The government, they charged, ensured that migrants had preferential access to education, jobs and other economic opportunities.

¶19. (C) Civil society and NGO activists also repeated the common Papuan refrain that the central government was not committed to implementing Special Autonomy. They remain deeply suspicious of the police and military and are increasingly alienated from the central government and from non-Papuan Indonesians.

¶10. (C) Nabire will hold its first direct election of local officials in October 2008. No one has yet declared himself as a candidate; Youw and Karubaba told poloff they did not plan to run. (Note: both were appointed to their positions and have served since 2000.) Several observers told poloff they expected tesosbeteen ethnic Papuans and migrants to rise in advance of the vote. However, none predicted any significant violence.

WAMENA: BIG CHALLENGES, GOVERNMENT FALLING SHORT

¶11. (C) A May 6 visit to Wamen provided a much less positive picture of local government and development. Wamena is the capital of Jayawijaya, a sprawling district of 200,000 residents--the vast majority ethnic Papuans--in the central Papua highlands. The area faces enormous development challenges. Most district residents live in remote villages and practice subsistence agriculture with little more than stone-age technology. Poverty is endemic.

¶12. (C) Located deep in a valley, Wamena has no access by road to the outside world. Everything that cannot be produced locally must be shipped by air. As a result, prices for basic commodities are at least 20-30 percent higher than in Jakarta. Communication with outlying villages is difficult, and most villages can only be reached by walking through dense jungle paths.

¶13. (C) Wamena's local government has effectively broken down. The bupati has been in jail on corruption charges since 2006. According to local residents, the vice bupati is almost never present in the town. He, too, is under investigation for alleged corruption. According to Barnabas Daryono, a well-connected local priest, many district government officials rarely report for work. (Note: Poloff was unable to meet any local government officials. No one answered the phone at any of the government offices we attempted to contact.)

¶14. (C) This failure of local governance is hurting Wamena's already vulnerable population. Government-run schools and clinics are chronically short of supplies and trained personnel. The few things that are moving ahead--such as the construction of a new bridge just outside of town--are the result of direct intervention by the provincial government.

¶15. (C) In contrast with the civilian elements of the local government, the police and military do appear to be functioning normally. (Note: Septel will report more fully on security force activity and human rights.) During Poloff's visit, the security forces maintained a very low-key presence, contrary to what NGOs sometimes allege is a massive

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and overt security presence in the highlands.

¶16. (C) Wamena residents will vote for local officials in August 2008. No candidates have come forward, although several officials currently working in the Provincial Government in Jayapura are expected to join the race. Given the record of the local government so far, Wamena residents do not expect very much improvement in their lives after the election.

¶17. (C) Jayapura-based officials worry that the elections will trigger unrest. Berty Fernandez, an advisor to Governor Suebu, told Poloff he expects candidates to appeal to supporters' tribal and clan loyalties. This, Fernandez fears, could lead to the kind of tribal violence that sometimes flares in the Papuan highlands.

#### COMPLEX TENSIONS

¶18. (C) Based on our soundings, Nabire is likely representative of many similarly sized coastal Papuan towns. Wamena, too, may be a representative example, albeit an extreme one, of governance in the Papua highlands. Both towns display problems found elsewhere across the province. A range of tensions--between Papuans and migrants and between Papuan groups--continues to simmer even in relatively successful Nabire. Like Papuans throughout the province, those in Nabire and Wamena are impatient with the slow implementation of Special Autonomy and feel they have yet to see significant improvements in their daily lives.

¶19. (C) Outside observers most commonly see Papua's problems in terms of a simple conflict between Papuans and the central government. The situation in Nabire and Wamena reveals a more complex situation. Tensions also exist between the provincial and district governments, between different Papuan groups and between Papuans and migrants. All of these hamper the ability of both provincial and district governments to deliver benefits to the people.

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